

The CZAR of Great Britain

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As a collector of word perfins, the British CZAR pattern has always fascinated me, particularly since it appears, I believe, exclusively on the stamps of Queen Victoria. Historically, Queen Victoria was related by marriage to several of the Russian Czars—most notably to the last Czar, Nicholas II. *Czar* has entered the English language as a word meaning ruler or head figure. Today it shows up even in Washington—as in economic czar, drug czar, and so forth.



The CZAR perfin, however, has nothing to do with Queen Victoria, Czar Nicholas, or any of the Washington czars.

According to a recent article by Dave Hill in the *Bulletin* of the British Perfins Society, the CZAR perfins (there are two varieties) were used by the firm of C. Czarnikow Limited of London.

Julius Caesar Czarnikow, who was known by his middle name, Caesar (is there a little ego showing?), was born in Germany in 1838. His father was a court agent to the Prince of Sonderhausen. When Czarnikow was just 16 he traveled to London and took a job as a clerk in a brokerage firm. He became a British citizen and a "sworn broker" before opening his own firm in 1861. Czarnikow & Company dealt primarily in cane sugar but later became the first to

import European beet sugar to England.

The firm expanded rapidly. Czarnikow opened offices in Glasgow in 1871, in Liverpool in 1881, and in New York in 1888.

He also dealt in cotton in Liverpool and helped found the London Produce Clearing House, which later became the International Commodity Clearing House, the first "futures market." He was the first chairman of Sena Sugar Factory in 1906. That firm operated sugar estates in Mozambique.

Hill describes Czarnikow as impulsive and short tempered, a man mostly focused on business who dominated decision making in his companies and fired and rehired employees on the same day. Curiously, though, he had his own collection of exotic animals and donated £1,000 for a new aviary at the London Zoo.

Czarnikow died in 1909 and none of his children followed him into the business, which soon ceased to operate.

The two varieties of the CZAR pattern are easy to spot. The one shown here is the smaller of the two, and the more common. It has eight holes in the C; the larger pattern has ten holes in the C.